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SUBJECT: MISSERYIA ORGANIZE TO BLOCK ABYEI BOUNDARY DEMARCATION

REF: A) KHARTOUM 862 B) KHARTOUM 1067

11. (SBU) Summary: Approximately one thousand members of the Misseryia, an Arabic-speaking nomadic tribe located primarily in South Kordofan State, met October 5 to reject the July 22 decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), which defined the boundaries of Abyei. Conference attendees agreed to organize a Misseryia armed force, and threatened the use of violence if necessary. Proven fighters, the Misseryia will be a major spoiler to the peace process unless a compromise is found to prevent them from taking up arms. End Summary.

MISSERIYA REJECT PCA DECISION, THREATEN VIOLENCE

12. (SBU) In an October 6 telephone conversation with Poloff, Sadig Babo Nimir, younger brother of the paramount leader of the Misseryia, confirmed press reports that approximately 1,000 members of the Misseryia tribe, a nomadic, Arabic-speaking ethnic group located primarily in South Kordofan state, met October 4-5 to reject the July 22 decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) which defined the boundaries of the special administrative district of Abyei. Nimir did not attend the conference, but said resolutions rejecting the PCA decision and the process of demarcation had been passed by the group. He also said that the group had decided to appeal the PCA decision to The Hague and to the Supreme Court of Sudan, and demanded that the Government of National Unity demarcate all other boundaries in the country before demarcating the Abyei boundary. He confirmed press reports that a threat to create an armed force had issued from the conference, but downplayed its significance; the Misseryia are already well-armed, he said, and would need only to come together to fight if the need arose. Nimer opined that the PCA decision was a deal between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), and the National Congress Party (NCP), did not include the Misseryia, and does not bind the Misseryia, who will not abide by it.

13. (SBU) Nimir told Poloff that he thinks the decision of the attendees reflects the views of all but a few Misseryia. However, in an October 7 conversation with Poloff, David Raikow, Political Officer for the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), said that he believed conference attendees were primarily Misseryia hard-liners, and that there are numerous moderate Misseryia whose views were not represented. Press reports indicated that South Kordofan Legislative Assembly members representing Abyei, Muglad, El-Salam, Lagawa, Kailk, and Babanousa, all areas with a significant Misseryia presence, attended the conference.

ROOT CAUSE OF PROBLEM: DESERTIFICATION

14. (SBU) In a September 28 meeting with PolChief, Nimir placed

direct responsibility for rising tensions in the area on the PCA decision, but said that the root of the problem is the desertification of traditional Misseryia grazing land and dwindling access to water. Nimir said the government has not honored promises to use oil money to drill wells for water or to provide other services in Misseryia areas.

¶5. (SBU) Nimir said that the Misseryia and the Ngok Dinka shared centuries of cooperation and could find a way to live together. However, he said that, while war is not a solution, implementation of the PCA decision will lead to war, calling the decision "a poisoned knife in the back of the CPA."

¶6. (SBU) Nimir said that the Misseryia have good relations with the SPLM, but are beginning to have a problem with the NCP. "The NCP doesn't accept international justice when it comes to Bashir, but are willing to accept the PCA decision," he said, adding that the NCP is trying to rupture the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Nimir said, however, that if the South secedes, the Misseryia will stay with the North. Nimir said the Ngok Dinka would also prefer to stay with the North, and that the best approach is a federal solution for Abyei, allowing Abyei residents dual citizenship.

SECURITY DELAYS ABYEI BOUNDARY DEMARCATION

¶7. (SBU) On October 5, Poloff spoke by phone with Kuwal Beyong (SPLM), Deputy Chair of the Abyei Boundary Demarcation Committee, the committee tasked with demarcating the Abyei boundary as described by the July 22 PCA decision (Ref B). Beyong confirmed news reports that the Abyei Joint Integrated Unit (JIU), tasked with

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providing security for the demarcation team, had been ordered back to its base on September 28. Beyong stated that he did not know why the JIU had been withdrawn, and said the demarcation team had encountered some local Misseryia, but that no friction had resulted. (Note: October 6 press reports quoted an unnamed Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) commander in Nyama who said the JIU needed to provide advance written documentation of their visit to the border area, as this was not part of their area of responsibility. Post has been unable to confirm this report. End Note.) As of October 5, Beyond said, o physical demarcation of the Abyei boundary had occurred, but the Committee was scheduled to meet on October 6 to create a timetable for continuing work.

¶8. (SBU) Comment: The nomadic Misseryia, arguably Khartoum's most effective fighters in the North-South civil war, are reportedly restless and discontented with Khartoum's treatment since the war's end. Although the PCA decision emphasizes that it is without prejudice to the Misseryia's traditional grazing rights in Abyei, the Misseryia are aware that in 2011, the Abyei boundaries set pursuant to the arbitration award could become an international border. Coupled with their distrust of the government, that prospect has turned the boundary demarcation process into an existential threat to their entire way of life. End Comment.

ASQUINO